

# EL GRECO

F. GRAY GRISWOLD





Ex Libris  
JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

THE SPORTING GALLERY  
AND BOOKSHOP, INC.

No. 38, East 52nd Street, New York

J.

Henry C. Smith.

1929.







# EL GRECO









# EL GRECO

FRANK GRAY GRISWOLD

*Frank Gray Griswold*



PRIVATELY PRINTED

1878



# EL GRECO

FRANK GRAY GRISWOLD

*J. Gray Griswold*



PRIVATELY PRINTED

1929

ONE HUNDRED COPIES OF EL GRECO HAVE  
BEEN PRINTED BY EUGENE V. CONNETT AT  
THE DERRYDALE PRESS, OF WHICH THIS IS  
NO. 15.

COPYRIGHT 1929—F. GRAY GRISWOLD

## FOREWORD

Señor Manuel B. Cossio's Appreciation of

EL GRECO

He was a stranger, a Cretan, who had pastured in Italy, thoroughly alive, faithful to the traditions of the painting of his native land, following a straight furrow into which he was sowing good seed. He was the greatest, the most human, and for those reasons the most noble of all our Spanish painters. He was filled with the sadness of his heroes at the same moment that Cervantes (1547-1616) was creating the story of that most noble *Caballero de la triste figura*—Don Quixote.



THIS device is the lily-hilted sword of St. James. It is the emblem of the Knights of Santiago de Compostela, an order founded in the 10th century for the purpose of defending the true faith against the Moors who first invaded Spain in 711 A. D. It was embroidered on the mantles of the knights of old, and later on their doublets. It appears in the self-painted portrait of Velázquez in *Las Meninas*, and also in El Greco's *El Entierro*. See page 42.

ONE HUNDRED COPIES OF EL GRECO HAVE  
BEEN PRINTED BY EUGENE V. CONNETT AT  
THE DERRYDALE PRESS, OF WHICH THIS IS  
NO. 15.

COPYRIGHT 1929—F. GRAY GRISWOLD



## FOREWORD

Señor Manuel B. Cossio's Appreciation of

EL GRECO

He was a stranger, a Cretan, who had pastured in Italy, thoroughly alive, faithful to the traditions of the painting of his native land, following a straight furrow into which he was sowing good seed. He was the greatest, the most human, and for those reasons the most noble of all our Spanish painters. He was filled with the sadness of his heroes at the same moment that Cervantes (1547-1616) was creating the story of that most noble *Caballero de la triste figura*—Don Quixote.



## PORTRAITS

- I. Stephanus, about 1571. Vienna Gallery.
- II. Clovio, 1571-1576. Naples Gallery.
- III. Vincenzio Anastagi, 1571-1576. Frick Collection, New York.
- IV. Lady in Ermine, 1571-1576. Sir John Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- V. Pompeo Leoni, 1576-1582. Mr. A. Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- VI. Caballero with Hand on Breast, 1577-1584. Prado.
- VII. A Doctor, 1577-1584. Prado.
- VIII. De la Casa de Leiva, 1577-1584. Sir W. Van Horne, Montreal.
- IX. Unknown Caballero, 1584-1594. Prado.
- X. The Family, 1586.
- XI. Duque de Benavente, 1590-1600. Bayonne Gallery.
- XII. Cardinal Guevara, 1590-1600. Havemeyer Collection, New York.
- XIII. Unknown Caballero, 1584-1594. Prado.
- XIV. A Poet, 1560-1600. Leningrad.
- XV. Rodrigo Vasquez, 1594-1604. Prado.

- XVI. Don Diego de Covarrubias, 1594-1604.  
Toledo.
- XVII. Antonio de Covarrubias, 1594-1604.  
Toledo.
- XVIII. El Greco, 1594-1604. de Bereute, Madrid.
- XIX. The Lady with the Flower, 1594-1604.  
A. Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- XX. Unknown Lady, 1594-1604. Toledo.
- XXI. Cardinal Guevara, 1594-1604. Paris.
- XXII. Cardinal Quiroga, 1594-1604. Madrid.
- XXIII. Julian Romero, 1594-1604. Paris.
- XXIV. Juan de Avila, 1594-1604. Toledo.
- XXV. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVI. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVII. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVIII. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXIX. A Painter, 1604-1614. Seville.
- XXX. San Ignacio de Loyola, 1604-1614. Paris.
- XXXI. Bracamonte, 1604-1614. Avila.
- XXXII. A Friar, 1604-1614. Madrid.
- XXXIII. Friar Hortensio Paravicino, 1604-1614.  
Madrid.
- XXXIV. Friar Hortensio Paravicino, 1604-1614,  
Boston Museum of the Fine Arts.

- XXXV. A Friar, 1604-1614. Madrid.
- XXXVI. Antonio Covarrubias, 1604-1614. Toledo.
- XXXVII. Don Diego Covarrubias, 1604-1614.  
Toledo.
- XXXVIII. Don Diego Covarrubias, 1604-1614.  
Bucharest.
- XXXIX. Cardinal Tavera, 1604-1614. Toledo.



# EL GRECO







## EL GRECO



AM not an art critic nor do I pretend to be a connoisseur of art. This book is simply an appreciation of my friend, El Greco. I say friend for I have cultivated his acquaintance since I was introduced to him in Spain in 1900. At that time he was little known and was not greatly appreciated outside of his adopted land.

We had a few of his pictures to enjoy in London, Paris, and Vienna, but one cannot know him without going to Spain. It was there that I became enchanted with his paintings, and since then I have never lost an opportunity to gain what information I could concerning this elusive and very great artist.

I have read all that I could find that has been written about him in four languages, and have studied Spanish for the sole purpose of reading Cossio's great book.

Cossio is a true historian who tells only what he really knows and can prove, but there are others who have invented fairy tales as to what El Greco did or should not have done.

Few facts are known about this great artist, so that his supposed life can be traced only by the works of art he has left behind him; these tell of his early endeavors and the progress he made as a painter, sculptor and architect.

He was practically unknown outside of Spain until in late years, for many of his paintings had been attributed to others, so that until they had been examined by the experts of modern times he had the credit of having painted but few pictures. Owing to his versatility his works had long been assigned to several different artists of the XVI century. But he signed many of his pictures, and on examination his name which had been overlooked was often found. In the so-called *Palladio* portrait it was discovered below the edge of the frame. In others his strange markings were found in odd places.

In the early part of this century experts journeyed to Spain in order to study El Greco and they were more than astonished by what they found.

In 1908 the great book "El Greco" by Manuel B. Cossio appeared, but could be read only by those who knew Spanish. A little later "Die Spanische Reise" by Julius Meier-Graefe was written. He claims to have discovered El Greco, is most enthusiastic about his pictures, and even derides the ability of Velásquez so as to glorify the Greek artist. It is a most interesting work, although one cannot fully agree with the deductions of the author. It has lately been translated into English as "The Spanish Journey" and is well worth reading.

Many other works have been written on the same subject, the most interesting of which is the monumental production of the Danish expert J. F. Willumsen, which has been admirably translated into flowing French by J. J. Gateau and others, and is called "La Jeunesse du Peintre El Greco." It is beautifully illustrated and worthy of deep study. The author attempts to follow the early life of the painter by his pictures, and describes what, in his mind, caused El Greco to change his method of painting from time to time, what artists influenced his progress, and the reason why his pictures had so often been attributed to the genius of others. He takes you on a journey through the art of

the XVI century that is fascinating to follow, and his deductions seem most plausible to me, an amateur.

Cossio tabulates 456 pictures that he knows of and believes were painted by El Greco. It is not my purpose nor would it be in my power to describe them. The most important ones have been fully noted and judged by the mighty. What I desire to do, as an amateur, is to draw the attention of those who are as ignorant as I was to the great portraits painted by the Greek master.



## II.



Artists from Velázquez to Sargent have studied El Greco and profited thereby. The former would probably never have painted *Las Lanzas* had he not had the inspiration of El Greco's *El Espolio*, yet how different these great pictures are. El Greco created the impression of a crowd by properly placing a few figures, while Velázquez employs a multitude for the same purpose. *El Espolio* appears as if seen by a sudden flashlight at just the proper moment, while *Las Lanzas* has the studied effect of a still movie that had been rehearsed many times. Is there any picture of the XVI



the XVI century that is fascinating to follow, and his deductions seem most plausible to me, an amateur.

Cossio catalogues 456 pictures that he knows of and believes were painted by El Greco. It is not my purpose nor would it be in my power to describe them. The most important must have been fully noted and judged by the artist. What I desire to do is to attract, with Greco the attention of those who are as ignorant as I was to the great portraits painted by the Greek master.



Since these Velázquez or Sargent have studied El Greco and painted thereby. The Spaniard would probably never have painted *Las Lanzas* had he not had the inspiration of El Greco's *El Expolio*, yet how El Greco, these great painters are. El Greco created the impression of a crowd by properly placing a few figures, while Velázquez employs a multitude for the same purpose. *El Expolio* appears as if seen by a sudden floodlight at just the proper moment, while *Las Lanzas* has the studied effect of a still scene that had been rehearsed many times. It is merely a picture of the XVI







century that has more glorious color than *El Espolio*?

Sargent visited Spain, and gained much by his study of Spanish art and was fortunate enough to unearth several works by El Greco in the cellar of the Prado. These pictures were in a lamentable condition but have since been renovated.

One often hears the remark: "Yes, El Greco painted some wonderful pictures yet one cannot admire the grotesque, elongated horrors that came from his brush." There are many such small pictures, but did he ever see them? I doubt it. His art was a cult in Spain during his Toledo period, and has been ever since among Spanish artists. Spain has produced many poor artists and they have been endeavoring to copy El Greco's methods for three hundred years.

When he died he left a son, a very poor painter, and numerous helpers and pupils, the best of whom was Tristán. They no doubt produced many so-called El Greco paintings in attempting to carry on the tradition.

It may be possible that El Greco was astigmatic and that this infirmity increased as he grew older. Counter-acting lenses were invented about 70 years ago, so that the painter could not have profited by them. It is

quite possible that late in life he painted as he saw but not as the normal eye sees. All artists have mannerisms and his, no doubt, were more pronounced than is usual.

Probably some of these adversely criticised paintings, if they are by him, were studio sketches, painted in a great hurry for the purpose of the study of light or color, which he never expected the world would see.

You can follow the history of the world from the time of the Egyptians until the present day by studying the pictures that have been painted during the different periods of civilization. The paintings in the tombs and the carvings on the monuments tell the history of the customs of the Egyptians, how they dressed, fought, hunted, and lived. The wall paintings in Pompeii describe the customs and morals of that city in 79 A.D. The story is continued in the pictures and sculpture of the Middle Ages and down to the present day. It is a much truer history than the written word. One can always trust what one sees better than what one hears or what has been written. The presumptions of historians are handed down from generation to generation until they are believed to be truths. Historians copy as facts what their predecessors have assumed, and

history becomes strewn with untruths and inaccuracies.

The marble bust of Caesar gives one a better insight into his character than the hundreds of books that have been written about him, and you are inclined to forgive the man who allowed Rome to burn when you gaze upon the baby Nero in Florence.

The latest historian, Ludwig, in order to sell his book, recites imaginary conversations of Napoleon. We know that the great man never thought these things, much less spoke them, yet they may be considered authentic at some future time.



### III.



The first half of the XVI century was a glorious period in Italian art and the human form was considered divine. Corregio (1494-1534) painted pictures of Venus and of Leda as well as of angels. Titian (1477-1576) glorified the human body in his pictures of Venus and in Sacred and Profane Love. The saints of Paul Veronese were beautiful fair-haired Venetian women arrayed in splendid brocades. Raphael placed

normal people in his religious pictures clad in beautiful colored raiment.

You have but to study these pictures to appreciate what a sumptuous generation it was. There was little fear of God or the devil, and luxury and art flourished. Life was short and gay, yet the artists seem to have been exceptions for many of them lived long in years. Michelangelo lived to be 89 and Titian was 99 when he died.

If El Greco (1537-1614) had been born fifty years earlier he probably would have told the same story. It is true that his early pictures were of the Venetian school, but later he was forced by circumstances to change his subjects and his manner of painting.

The reaction in the world started in Spain, and as Italy was under the political domination of Spain at that time, it was soon felt there. Sainte Thérèse was having her visions about 1560, Loyola was teaching his doctrines and founding the Jesuits and Philip II (1527-1598) when not praying on his knees was writing at his desk. Pius V became Pope in 1566. He was a Dominican friar who had been closely related to the horrors of the Inquisition and was not in the least like the easy-going Julius II and Leo X, who had been



normal people in his religious pictures about in beautiful colored raiment.

You have but scarcely these pictures as appropriate about a mercenary generation as well. There was little fear of God or the devil, and luxury and art flourished. Life was short and gay, yet the artists seem to have been exceptions for many of them lived long in years. Michelangelo lived to be 92 and Titian was 94 when he died.

If El Greco (1541-1614) had been born fifty years earlier he probably would have told the same story. It is true that his early pictures were of the Venetian school, but later he was forced by circumstances to change his subjects and his manner of painting.

The reaction in the world awaited in Spain, and as Italy was under the political domination of Spain at that time, it was soon felt there. Saint Theresa was having her visions about 1560, Loyola was teaching his disciples and founding the Jesuits and Philip II (1527-1598) when not preying on his knees was weeping at his death. Pius V became Pope in 1566. He was a Dominican friar who had been closely related to the horrors of the Inquisition and was cut to the heart like the pious king James II and Leo X, who had been







great patrons of art. He worked entirely for the Church and led an austere life. The Church was in danger, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had appeared and the Reformation was under way. Titian was old but Veronese was painting his large pictures of feasts.

The human form became anathema because its contemplation encouraged the sins of the flesh. Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, which had been so much admired, were now considered indecent and the beautiful nude figures were later covered with drapery.

A picture now must not appeal to the senses but must elevate the soul. This was at first very difficult for El Greco, and when he arrived in Spain he found he could not please Philip II because his pictures were too earthly. What the king desired was *extase*. No picture appealed to him unless it inspired him to kneel down and pray. It was a period of intolerance and sackcloth and ashes. This continued for long years in Spain. It accounts for the paintings of Velázquez being often somber in color. What is probably his greatest picture—*Los Borachos*—is a study in browns. Bright colors were considered immoral. Ribera (1588-1656) and Zurbaran (1598-1662) painted in brown and black,

and it accounts for the woe-begone, emaciated saints and suffering humanity clad in brown as portrayed in the paintings of those days. It was a sad mystical time both in the world and in the world of art.

Artists in those days received orders from their patrons for pictures to be placed in churches and monasteries and were not only given the subject to be painted but also the dimension and shape of the canvas desired, for it had to fit a certain wall space. This is partly the reason for the elongated saints painted by El Greco in his later period. He was given long and narrow strips to fill with more than life size figures. In order to obtain the best effect he was obliged to elongate his subjects.



#### IV.



Properly to understand the pictures El Greco painted during the latter half of his life we must consider the conditions under which he worked. In the first place he lived in Toledo.

Toledo occupies a rugged promontory of granite, and the deep gorge of the river Tagus lies below the city. From a distance the town has the aspect of a vast

fortress that is dominated by the towers of the great cathedral. The streets are very narrow and there are few *plazas*. The houses are massive and somber with great iron-studded doorways leading into *patios*. It is a Gothic and medieval city which has always been the centre of Spanish Christianity and the seat of an archbishop who is the "primate of all the Spains." It is so silent and sad a city that even the doleful Philip II could not live there, for he moved the capital to Madrid in 1560.

It was in this city, with priests and monks at every step and the clergy for his chief patrons, that El Greco passed the latter half of his life.

The Pope, a fanatical horseman, was in the saddle and the world was priest ridden. El Greco had to earn his daily bread with his brush and was obliged to paint the subjects that were demanded.

Under these conditions it is not to be wondered at that he painted pictures full of mysticism and that he has since been considered a mystic by all his critics.

I find however that he had the *joie de vivre*, for it is known he had a charming mistress and went to the trouble and expense of having musicians come to him from Venice for the purpose of entertaining his friends

and himself while they dined. He also had a sense of humor for Pacheco, the father-in-law of Velásquez, relates that when he visited him in his old age, he asked him which was of more value, design or color. The answer was color. "But," said Pacheco, "Michelangelo."—"Oh, well," replied El Greco, "Michelangelo was an admirable man, but he had no idea of painting." Pacheco missed seeing the twinkle in El Greco's eye.

There are other reasons why he was not a mystic at heart. One is that he was a great colorist and mystics do not fancy bright colors. He was not a colorist of the Venetian school of suffused color, not like Tintoretto who was sparing of bright colors, but he was a colorist of his own school of vivid colors. It has taken the painters who have followed him three hundred years to acquire what he did with such ease and success.

He was a Greek with the Byzantine sense of color, for color is indigenous in the East and is the essence of Oriental life.

He beautified his pictures with blues, reds, greens, and yellows as well as with pink and grey.

This artist was a creature of environment and was obliged to change the colors on his palette as some



and himself while they dined. He also had a sense of humor for Pacheco, the father-in-law of Velázquez, relates that when he wanted him in his old age, he asked him which was of more value, design or color. The answer was color. "But," said Pacheco, "Michelangelo?"—"Oh, well," replied El Greco, "Michelangelo was an admirable man, but he had no idea of painting." Pacheco smiled seeing the twinkle in El Greco's eye.

There are other reasons why he was not a mystic at heart. One is that he was a great colorist and mystics do not fancy bright colors. He was not a colorist of the Venetian school of suffused color, nor like Tintoretto who was sparing in bright colors, but he was a colorist of his own school of vivid colors. It has taken the painters who have followed him three hundred years to suggest something that will reach him and succeed.

He was a mystic with the Byzantine sense of color, the color indigenous in the East and is the essence of Eastern life.

He beautified his pictures with blue, red, green, and yellows as well as with pink and grey.

This artist was a painter of environment and was obliged to change the colors on his palette as some







birds change their plumage according to season and to landscape, and for the same reason—self-protection. El Greco was a lone Greek in a foreign land and his religion was probably far from the religion of the Spain of his day. He was very intellectual, for we know that he had the classics in his library and that he studied architecture and was an accomplished architect as well as a sculptor in both wood and stone. He probably had a religion that intellect could grasp.

The religion of Spain was a brutal religion, a religion that burned a man at the stake if he failed to follow the canons of the Church, and El Greco was obliged to pretend to save his soul in order to save his life.

That El Greco painted pictures late in life which were full of mysticism is quite true, but I believe he was forced to do so by circumstance. I can see him painting an elongated, emaciated saint and laughing in his sleeve as he accomplished it.

You have but to look at the portraits he painted to see how human he was. He placed portraits of living men in most of his large pictures. There are over twenty-five in *El Entierro*, and he painted his own portrait in five of his pictures, not including the supposed portrait of himself.

El Greco was a paradox among painters for, as I have said, he was born fifty years too late yet he lived three hundred years too early, for he was a great colorist and the first of the impressionist painters. He was fond of life, and history calls him a mystic. Many people claim he was mad, which he would have been could he have seen some of the pictures attributed to him by which his sanity is judged.



V.



It is possible to follow the artistic career of El Greco by the study of the pictures he painted during the different periods of his life, and also to understand not only why he changed his method of painting from time to time, but also the reason which was responsible for the selection of some of the subjects he was inspired to portray.

The word *Kres*—Cretan, appears on several of El Greco's early pictures, so we know he was born on the Island of Crete, probably at Candia in 1537, though the date is uncertain.

His real name was Doménicos Theotokópoulos but

he was also known as Theotokópouli, Doménico Greco, Il Greco, and finally El Greco.

There are frescoes in Crete that date from the XII to the XVI century. There are also many icons to be found of early date so that it is evident that Byzantine art flourished there in early times.

Like most of the great artists of Italy El Greco began his artistic studies at an early age and it is probable that he became an apprentice to some Greek artist or artist-monk when quite young. There is no doubt that he acquired a good education at that time for we know how charmingly he painted the tiny Greek script later on.

His first work as a painter was probably copying icons. It is a rigid form of painting with little or no perspective, yet with a subtle system of producing the effect of depth. In this work he acquired a technique which never failed him in after life.

It was the form of painting that had been approved by the early Church and most beautifully expressed in mosaics.

The West has never understood mosaics, for it uses them for decorating flat spaces in connection with stone. In San Marco the mosaics are part and parcel

of the structure as they should be. The upper part of the building is composed of curves without any flat expanse, sharp edges, or right angles, just flowing curves. The edges are blunt and all angles rounded, while the surfaces are uneven and slightly undulating. The material is unbroken by stone. It is the same in the Palatina in Palermo. The beauty of the dome and the vaults in San Marco is derived from the mosaics. The Eastern mosaic theory is an architectural motive, not simply a decoration.

It is probable that El Greco left his native town about 1560 when twenty-three years of age. He had seen pictures by Bellini in Candia and had become aware that there was much for him to learn.

At the time of his arrival in Venice her glory had begun to fade. America had been discovered in 1492 and the sea route to India had been found. Commerce was no longer confined to the Mediterranean and the East, and Portugal, Spain and England were becoming world traders.

Venice has changed but little since 1550. The city has faded, buildings have crumbled and have been replaced, but the city has not increased in size or in population.



of the surface, as they should be. The upper part of the building is composed of curves without any flat expanse, sharp angles or right angles, just flowing curves. The edges are bevelled and all angles rounded, while the surface is covered with slight undulating. The material is unbroken by stone. It is the same in the Palarium at Palermo. The beauty of the dome and the vaults in San Marino is derived from the mosaic. The European mosaic theory is an arrangement of mosaic, not simply a decoration.

It is probable that El Greco left his native town about fifteen or twenty thousand years of age. He had been persecuted by Belshazzar in Candia and had become weary that there was much for him to learn.

At the time of his arrival in Venice his glory had begun to fade. America had been discovered in 1492 and the conquest of India had been found. Commerce was no longer confined to the Mediterranean and the East and Portugal, Spain and England were becoming more powerful.

Venice was changed but little since 1550. The city was more crowded than ever before and more beautiful, but the city had not changed in its power or its population.







El Greco no doubt felt at home in San Marco yet he arrived at an evil moment, for many of the Byzantine mosaics were being removed to be replaced by others after drawings by Titian and Tintoretto.

Venice was on the fringe of the East and looked toward the Eastern Empire; she disliked the West and its barbarians. Her art had been Oriental until it became tinged with a Western spirit. San Marco was her color inspiration, and it was Venice that taught the world what color was.

But the young artist had other things to study, and what interested him most was the Venetian school of painting. At that date Titian was eighty-three but Tintoretto was only forty-two and Veronese only thirty-two years of age.

There was a Greek quarter in Venice in those days where about 4000 Greeks lived. The "Rio dei Greci" still exists today as does the Greek church of San Giorgio with its leaning campanile. El Greco probably felt at home among his countrymen for he spoke but little Italian at that time.

He no doubt attempted to find employment but Byzantine painters were not in demand. We know, however, that he and Schiavone, the artist, became

friends, and that he learned much by watching his Italian friend at work.

There had no doubt been many Greek artists in Italy from time to time, but I know of but one great picture by a Greek.

There is a small church in Venice which at one time was surrounded by vineyards. It is named San Francesco de la Vigna, the *façade* is by Palladio, and the interior was restored by Sansovino. In this church there is a beautiful enthroned Madonna by Fra Antonio de Negroponte painted about 1450. It is of great beauty and it is the only work known by this artist.

During this period of domicile in Venice the youthful El Greco painted his first five pictures:

1. *A Dominican Saint*, Willumsen Collection.
2. *The Miracle of Pentecost*, Willumsen Collection.
3. *A drawing of Christ supported by angels*, Willumsen Collection.
4. *A miniature of a Cretan woman*, Willumsen Collection.
5. *A portrait of a young Cretan woman*, Stirling Maxwell.



## VI.



What we know next of El Greco is that he is hard at work in the studio of Jacopo Da Ponte who was known as Bassano (1510-1592) and who lived in the town of that name which lies on the Brenta some 60 kilometres northwest of Venice. How he came to find employment there is not known, but it is probable that he met Bassano at the studio of Schiavone, for Tintoretto, Veronese, Schiavone and Bassano were firm friends.

In those days Bassano had a great reputation as an artist and was flooded with orders. He needed help and chose El Greco for that purpose. Bassano is said to have been a very genial man, totally without vanity and a most industrious worker. He painted many large and small pictures and also many frescoes during his long life of 82 years.

It is probable that El Greco worked for Bassano from 1560-1570—ten years as a workman without any artistic acknowledgment, for his name does not appear with that of Bassano on any known picture.

When Bassano's son succeeded El Greco as his father's helper we find Francesco's name on a picture in conjunction with that of Bassano the father.

In order to assist Bassano El Greco was obliged to adapt his methods to those of his master and to learn to paint in the Bassano manner. In this way he became thoroughly grounded in the Venetian school of painting.

If a student takes the trouble to study the numerous paintings by Bassano he will find that this painter had three different manners of painting.

During his first period, about 1550 to 1562, the figures he painted, as well as the animals he portrayed, were thickset and squat in type, there was a lack of perspective, and his colors were dark.

From about 1562 to 1572 his work gradually changed. The figures became more true to life, more elongated, and much more graceful, the perspective improved in a marked degree, and the colors became much warmer and more brilliant.

If you scrutinize the pictures of this, the greatest period of Bassano, you will find the unmistakable touch of a foreign hand.

This hand was undoubtedly El Greco's, yet what part of these pictures he drew or painted is difficult to judge, for he was always apparently trying to follow Bassano's manner. The success and superior beauty of



In order to avoid *Rasano* El Greco was obliged to adapt his style to the manner of his master and to learn to paint in the *Rasano* manner. In this way he became thoroughly grounded in the Venetian school of painting.

If a student takes the trouble to study the numerous paintings by *Rasano* he will find that this painter had three different manners of painting.

During his first period, about 1490 to 1500, the figures he painted, as well as the animals he portrayed, were thick-set and squat in type; there was a lack of perspective, and his colors were dark.

From about 1562 to 1572 his work gradually changed. The figures became more true to life, more elongated, and much more graceful, the perspective improved to a marked degree, and the colors became much warmer and more brilliant.

If you examine the pictures of this, the greatest period of *Tiziano*, you will find the unmistakable touch of a foreign hand.

This hand was unfortunately El Greco's, just what period of *Tiziano* painted he drew or painted is difficult to judge, for he was always apparently trying to follow *Rasano's* manner. The sundered, uneven beauty of

CONSEJO DE ESTADO Y VERAS ENOR. D. LA CASA DE  
V. Y D. ESTADO D. VANOS. D. RIOTOVIA:







these pictures is undoubted, but after 1572 Bassano slipped back into his first or pre-El Greco style, losing the technique and the color which he had displayed with such success during his second and brilliant period.

El Greco probably left Bassano about 1570 owing doubtless to the fact that the master had three sons who were budding artists and quite sufficient help in that busy studio. These three sons continued the Bassano tradition for long years after the death of the father.

El Greco learned much during those ten years and found time to paint pictures outside of the studio in his own style.

There are eight pictures in existence that he is supposed to have painted during those busy years:

1. *Portrait of a man called Stephanus*, Hof Gallery, Vienna.
2. *Christ Curing the Blind*, Royal Gallery, Dresden.
3. *The Baptism of Christ*, Cook Collection, England.
4. *Christ in the Temple*, Cook Collection, England.
5. *Christ Curing the Blind*, Don Valle, Madrid.
6. *The Abduction of Proserpine*, Doria Gallery, Rome.

7. *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, Paris.

8. *Boy Blowing on Embers*, Nat. Museum, Naples.

There is little of Bassano in these pictures but some of them remind one of the artist's early Byzantine education, chiefly in the grouping of the figures. He borrows figures from Bassano's pictures but perhaps the originals had been drawn and may be also painted by El Greco's hand.



## VII.



During this his second residence in Venice El Greco is supposed to have obtained work in the studio of Titian. The foundation for this belief is that some critics think it was he who painted the hand of Titian's portrait of Filippo Strozzi. There is also a letter, which was found in the Vatican Library, written by Clovio, the miniaturist, to Cardinal Allesandro Farnese recommending a young Cretan painter as a "student of Titian." What the word student means in this case is doubtful, for there is every reason to believe that El Greco thoroughly studied the works of Titian and profited much thereby in style, yet he may also have

worked in the studio. It was perhaps from Titian that he acquired the habit of inserting portraits into his pictures.

El Greco is supposed to have painted two pictures during this visit in Venice: *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and a supposed portrait of *Palladio*, both of which are in Copenhagen.

Titian was now old and must have had helpers for he kept on producing pictures. Perhaps El Greco gave him aid. If he did it was only for a short period for we hear that he left for Rome in 1570.

How he journeyed is not known but most likely via Ferrara, Bologna, and Florence. Travel by road was no small undertaking in those days as the highways were infested by brigands. Voyagers assembled in towns until, owing to sufficient numbers, they could proceed and protect themselves and their goods.

Our friend no doubt remained some time in Florence for there was much to see and to learn. He found that the Florentine painters had subordinated color to form which was the opposite of what Venice had taught him.

Benvenuto Cellini and the painter Bronzino were still living.

After leaving Florence he may have stopped at Spoleto in order to see the frescoes by Filippo Lippi.

El Greco found the conditions in Rome quite different from those he had left in Venice. Instead of fair ladies in silks and brocades, he found the streets full of priests, and solemn processions of the Church in place of the gay masquerades of the Piazza San Marco.

Did he like the change? If he had he probably would have remained there instead of going so soon to Spain.

Clovio's letter to the Cardinal was of great benefit to our friend for we find him living at the Palazzo Farnese where Clovio also resided.

Cardinal Farnese was a great patron of art and owned a wonderful collection which is now distributed throughout Italy.

He bought three of El Greco's paintings:

*The Portrait of Clovio*

*Boy Blowing on Embers*

*Christ Healing the Blind*

The two former are now in the Naples Museum and the last is in Parma.

The Cardinal was a great person in many ways for he had Vignola build for him the Villa Caprarola with



After leaving Florence he may have stopped at  
Cortona in order to see the frescoes by Filippo Lippi.  
El Greco found the conditions in Rome quite different  
from those he had seen in Venice. Instead of the  
ladies in silks and brocades, he found the stern faces of  
priests, and solemn processions of the Church. It was  
all the great pomp and splendour of the Piazza San Pietro.

Did he like the change? If he had he probably would  
have remained there instead of going so soon to Spain.  
Clovio's appointment to the Cardinal was of great benefit  
to him, and he would find him living in the Palazzo  
Farnese where Clovio also resided.

Cardinal Farnese was a great patron of art and  
was a personal friend of Michelangelo which is now evident  
in his work.

(He made three of Michelangelo's paintings)

*The Portrait of Clovio*

*Boy Blowing on Embers*

*Christ Healing the Blind*

The last three are now in the Naples Museum and  
the first is in Parma.

After his appointment to the Cardinal he went to Spain  
in 1566 and lived there for two years in the Villa Caprarola with







its wonderful gardens, and with the Farnese Gardens he beautified Rome.

El Greco had a studio in Rome and apparently was his own master for the first time. It was then that he studied architecture and sculpture and became proficient in both.

Michelangelo had died in 1564. Clovio and Vasari were the only artists of renown now left in Rome.

Girolamo da Fano had been employed by Pius V to drape some of the figures of the Michelangelo frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. This sacrilege was pursued further by order of Clement XIII as late as 1760.

Gossip relates that Rome was greatly shocked by a remark that El Greco is said to have made. He is reported to have said that if they would destroy all the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel he would be pleased to repaint them in just as beautiful a manner but more chaste in feeling.

This is supposed to have been the cause of El Greco's departure from Rome. Michelangelo was considered to be a god and Rome could not countenance anyone who made such a statement.

Personally I do not believe the story for one moment, for, although we know by the remarks he made

in Court at Toledo some years later that El Greco had an exalted opinion of his powers, and that he was a brave man, yet we also know that he was not a foolish man, and that remark was foolish.

It is possible that he did not admire Michelangelo's colors but his artistic eye could not have failed to admire the form and the wonderful drawing of the master. Then why go to Spain for that reason? Why not return to Venice?

What in my opinion induced him to go to Spain was the common report of the great doings of Philip II. Spain appeared as an Eldorado for a young and ambitious painter.

Philip II had laid the foundations of the Escorial in 1563 and had written to his Ambassador in Rome to send him all the talent that he could for the purpose of embellishing the great structure.

There is no doubt that El Greco found the conditions in the Eternal City very dismal and saw little chance for employment. There appeared to be great possibilities in Spain.

Titian had been bidden to journey there but had refused on account of age. He sent a pupil who, as El Mudo, became painter to the King. Titian also sent

several paintings which are still to be found in the Escorial hanging near El Greco's great painting of San Mauricio.

El Greco left Rome for Spain in the spring of 1572 after a residence of one and a half years.



## VIII.



It was a great undertaking to travel from Rome to Madrid in 1572, and a costly one. El Greco must have saved his earnings during the ten years he was working for Bassano to be able to embark on such a venture.

It took a courier one month to carry the news of the battle of Lepanto to Philip II in Spain, and he probably journeyed by the quickest possible route.

It is unlikely that El Greco traveled by land. In the first place, it was too costly, and in the second place we know that he took a number of pictures with him, as well as numerous engravings and sketches of Italian pictures, for he reproduced many figures from them later in Spain.

A direct sea route from Civita Vecchia was open to him, but that was dangerous for the Mediterranean was alive with both Turkish and Barbary pirates.

He probably sailed along the coast to Genoa, from there to Marseilles, and thence to Barcelona. He then must have journeyed by land to Madrid and to the Escorial.

Spain was in her glory at that time, but the gold and silver which had been flowing into the country from Peru and Mexico had begun to demoralize the country and its inhabitants. The first false step Spain made was when the Inquisition banished all the Jews in 1492; and when in 1609 the Moriscoes, the backbone of the country, were ordered to depart within three days, her downfall was assured. The resources of Spain never recovered from this terrible blow.

The Moors had introduced the cultivation of sugar, rice, cotton, and silk, and had established a system of irrigation which gave fertility to the soil. The Province of Valencia had become a model of agriculture for the rest of Europe.

The Moors had shown superiority both in manufacture and in commerce, for the Christian inhabitants were haughty and indolent, and had left all degrading employment to their so-called inferiors. All these advantages were sacrificed in an insane desire to please the Church.



to go to the coast along the coast to Genoa, from there to France, and thence to Barcelona. He then crossed France by land to Madrid and to the Spanish court.

Spain was in her glory at that time, but the gold and silver which had been flowing into the country from Peru and Mexico had begun to demoralize the country and its inhabitants. The first false step Spain made was when the Inquisition banished all the Jews in 1492, and when in 1609 the Moriscos, the backbone of the country, were ordered to depart within three days, her downfall was assured. The resources of Spain were exhausted from the time 1510 on.

Columbus had introduced the cultivation of sugar, cotton, and silk, and had established a system of irrigation which gave fertility to the soil. The Provencal colonies had become a model of agriculture for the rest of Europe.

The Provencal colonies were in a state of manufacturing and commerce, for the Christian inhabitants were diligent, and indolent, and had left all degrading occupations to the Jewish population. All their advantages were lost when the Jews were driven to places of banishment.







The large supply of precious metal made gold and silver cheaper than elsewhere, and all other commodities much more expensive. Spanish gold left the country and enriched France and other lands.

In the beginning of the XVI century Spain had a population of over ten millions; in the following century the population fell to six millions. Her industries died away, her irrigation canals dried up, and the districts that had been highly cultivated by the Moors became deserts and have so remained to this day.

Charles V, Roman Emperor and King of Spain, abdicated in 1556, and his son Philip II became king.

Unlike his father, he considered that the pen was mightier than the sword. He was a self-righteous man, capable of endless toil, and he believed that he had great judgment in all things, but he was very slow in making up his mind.

He was very pious, and had a cell from which he could see Mass in the Escorial church, but he was very loose with women. He married four times yet lived in adultery with Doña Maria de Osoria for many long years, or so they must have seemed to her.

This was the man with whom El Greco had to deal when he arrived in Spain.

Madrid was a dull little town of 30,000 inhabitants and the streets were full of lackeys. The gentry were all dressed in black with large white ruffs around their throats. The royal palace and the Court were there, but the town was very dull.

The Escorial was but 45 kilometres distant, and it is probable that there El Greco passed the greater part of his first four years in Spain. He worked for his friend Herrera, designing altar screens and probably paintings which he was not allowed to execute, for Tibaldo, a very mediocre painter, had the commission from the king.

He spoke very little Spanish but most of the artists at work at the monastery were Italians or had studied in Italy.

Although the king does not seem to have appreciated El Greco, the architect Herrera appears to have had a high regard for his talents.

There are seven pictures which it is believed were painted by El Greco during those four years.

1. *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastián*, Palencia.
2. *Pietà*, Huntington Collection.
3. *Don Diego Covarrubias*, Toledo.
4. *Pompeo Leoni*, Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.

5. *San Jerónimo*, National Gallery, London.
6. *Caballero with Hand on Breast*, Prado.
7. *Young Couple Lighting Flame*, Simon, Berlin.

In the last three pictures you may see the beginning of his Spanish manner.



IX.



The Escorial is one of the most remarkable buildings in Europe, comprising a monastery, a church, a palace, and a mausoleum. It is situated about 3500 feet above the sea on the southwestern slopes of the Sierra de Guadarrama in the most bleak spot in all Spain.

Its position is wonderful. Unlike Greek temples, few Christian churches are well placed. Ruskin says that a Christian church rising out of the midst of the hovels of the people is a lovely spectacle. That is merely a sentimental point of view.

The ancient Greeks considered a beautiful site a spot that the surrounding country could see, instead of a point from which the landscape can be seen. The most famous example of this is the Acropolis at Athens.

The doors of a Greek temple were thrown open so that the Shrine could be seen by the multitude, for the Greeks worshipped from without.

The Christians worship within their churches. In building their places of worship the first demand was accessibility for worship. Christianity is emotional, paganism was intellectual.

The French were defeated by the Spanish at St. Quentin in 1557, on the day that was sacred to St. Lawrence, so the king decided to build the Escorial in commemoration of this fact and dedicated it: *El real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial*.

It was built by Toledo and Herrera, has seven towers, fifteen gateways and 12,000 windows and doors. It covers nearly 400,000 square feet of land, is built of stone, and is the same color as the landscape.

It contains a church of great grandeur, underneath the altar of which there is a royal mausoleum where lie the remains of Charles V and the members of the royal family who have followed him.

When El Greco arrived in Spain in 1572 he must have been greatly disappointed to find that the building of the Escorial was so backward, for we know that the church was not roofed in until 1580. It is believed,



The doors of the Greek temple were thrown open so that the interior could be seen by the multitude, for the temple was empty from without.

The Spaniards worship within their churches. In visiting these places of worship the first demand was made for worship. Christianity is emotional, religion is intellectual.

The Moors were defeated by the Spanish at St. Isidoro in 1561, on the day that was sacred to St. Isidoro, and the King decided to build the Escorial in commemoration of this fact and dedicated it: *El real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial*.

It is built by Toledo and Herrera, 844 square feet. It has golden and white windows and doors. It is made of a grey granite from the hills of black stone, and is the same color as the landscape.

It contains a church of great grandeur and interest, in the choir of which there is a royal mausoleum where lie the remains of Charles V and the members of the royal family who have followed him.

When El Greco arrived in Spain in 1572 he must have been greatly disappointed to find that the building of the Escorial was so backward, for we know that the church was not started before 1580. It is believed,







however, that he worked there for some years, and it is supposed that he assisted Herrera, the architect, with his architectural drawings and in designing the altars and the statues which decorate the *façade* of the church.

What painting El Greco did in the church is mere surmise. El Mudo, a Spanish painter, was at work. Cambiaso was the first Italian artist to arrive. In 1587 Frederigo Zucarro followed, then "Tibaldi" or Pelligrini and the sculptor Leoni appeared.

Philip II did his best to have the church beautified, but the talent he was enabled to engage was not great. He sent for Vasari, Baroccio, and Clovio, but they refused to come to Spain.

It is supposed that El Greco designed the large altar screen. Cambiaso attempted to paint *The Martyrdom of San Lorenzo* and El Greco received an order from the king to paint *The Martyrdom of San Mauricio*. When they were finished the king did not like them.

He found El Greco's glorious painting too pagan, and objected that the martyr was being beheaded in the background of the picture, instead of in a more prominent position.

Philip had directed that the money for the very ex-

pensive ultramarine, which El Greco desired for his painting, should be advanced, but rejected the work of art as an altar piece when it was finished. It now hangs in the Chapter Room of the monastery in a much better light than that of the dismal church.

It is a large \* and glorious picture and was painted between 1580 and 1584. The figures stand as if carved against the background and are perfectly wrought. It is ancient art with figures as in a primitive. It is resplendent in color—blues from turquoise to sapphire, yellows from orange to lemon, and luminous red as well as pink. It is the most colorful of all El Greco's paintings.

Of this masterwork Maier-Graefe, the German critic, says: "It is not only the most beautiful picture that El Greco painted, but it is also the most beautiful picture of mankind."

This painting is signed and the word *Cretense* also appears.



X.



Doña Maria de Silva died in 1575 at the Convent of San Domingo de Silo in Toledo, where she had lived

\*4.44 x 3.02 metres.

for thirty-eight years. She left a large fortune to the convent for the purpose of rebuilding not only the convent but also the church of San Domingo el Antiguo.

Don Diego de Castilla was appointed executor of the will and employed Veragara and others to carry out this great work. These architects were discharged the following year and Herrera was substituted. He was building the Town Hall at Toledo at the time.

In 1577 we find El Greco at work in San Domingo, so it must have been Herrera who persuaded him to go to Toledo and who gave him the order to design and also to paint the altar screens.

I fancy it was Herrera who brought him to Toledo and I believe that it was his love for his mistress, Doña Gerónima, that kept him there until his death, for in his last testament he describes her: *es persona de confianza y de buena conciencia*, showing thus great respect for his lady. Why did he not marry her? She probably had a husband, and divorce was contrary to the canons of the Church.

A little later, El Greco painted his first great work—*El Espolio*—for the main altar of the Sacristy in the Toledo Cathedral.

The archives at Toledo tell of the lawsuits that El

Greco brought for the purpose of obtaining what was due him for the paintings which he had executed.

It was the custom, when ordering a picture from an artist, to make him an advance and for a jury to decide what the final payment should be, when the picture was finished.

The amount offered him for his *El Espolio* seemed insufficient to El Greco, so he brought suit. During the trial he refused to answer the question: "What brought you to Toledo?" He replied: "That has nothing to do with the case." He informed the judges that he would rather lease his pictures than sell them at such low prices, for he felt certain that a day would come when they would be of great value.

It was on account of the success of his work in San Domingo, as well as the renown created by *El Espolio*, that Philip II gave him the order for *San Mauricio*, which was painted about 1580. Then followed what by many is thought to be his greatest work: *El Entierro del Conde De Orgaz*, which was painted for San Tomé in Toledo about 1584. This is a large picture, 4.80 by 3.60 metres, containing in the lower half of the picture about thirty-five figures, most of which are portraits.



Greece brought for the purpose of obtaining what was due him for the paintings which he had executed.

It was the custom, when ordering a picture from an artist, to make him an advance and for a jury to decide when the final payment should be, when the picture was finished.

The artist offered him for his *El Espolio* several hundred crowns in El Tesoro, as he brought suit. During the trial he refused to answer the question: "What brought you to Toledo?" He replied: "That has nothing to do with the case." He informed the judges that he would rather lose his pictures than sell them at such low prices, for he felt certain that a day would come when they would be of great value.

It was the success of the success of his work in San Domingo, as well as the renown created by *El Espolio*, that Philip II gave him the order for *San Mauricio*, which was painted about 1585. Then followed what he himself is thought to be his greatest work: *El Emperador and Conde De Goya*, which was painted for San Tiago in Toledo about 1582. This is a large picture, with by 3.80 metres, containing in the lower half of the picture about thirty-five figures, most of which are portraits.







There is no evidence that El Greco ever owned land in Spain. At the time of his death, he lodged in the palace of the Marques de Villana. This building does not now exist. The house which is today called the "House of El Greco," is where the widow of the Marques lived for some years.

El Greco died on April 17th, 1614, and, with the exception of a few pictures, left no earthly goods.

All great artists have painted some mediocre pictures, it is only the mediocre painters who produce pictures all of one level mediocrity. But there is not a single picture that is really known to be by El Greco that is not full of interest, and the study of his different periods is a delight.

Just before his death El Greco was stricken with humor. The human form divine was, as I have said, considered anathema. Between 1601 and 1614 he painted two pictures: *The Laocoön* and *The Apocalypse*, in which all but one of the figures are stark naked, for the breech cloths on the two figures in the first named picture were evidently added later by another hand.

El Greco, being very old, probably thought he would be forgiven and painted these two pictures as a final rebuke to a prejudiced world.



What makes the art of El Greco unlike the art of any other painter is, that when he arrived in Venice he found a manner of painting which had taken 300 years to develop. By copying this manner he gradually acquired a combination of Oriental and Venetian art. This combination made his work unusually interesting and most individual. Added to this he also acquired the power to express both suffering and ecstasy, as well as charm and elegance.

It seems probable that El Greco learned to paint large pictures with life size figures at Bassano, for it would have been impossible for an artist, who had produced small paintings only, suddenly to paint those very large and glorious pictures between 1574 and 1584. This was his greatest period.

The paintings were:

*El Espolio*, 1574, Toledo.

*La Ascunción*, 1577, Chicago.

*El Entierro*, 1584, Toledo.

The Titianesque *Assumption*, which is in Chicago, is the most important El Greco, and, possibly, the most

important picture in America. It is large, being 3.85 x 1.96 metres, and the figures are life size.

This picture was painted for the altar of San Domingo in Toledo. It was coveted and acquired by the Infante Don Sabastian de Bourbon in 1830, who had it replaced by a poor copy. After passing through several hands it was purchased by Durand Ruel et Cie of Paris, who sold it to the Chicago Gallery where it suffers by being badly hung.

It was the study of the perspective in painting that gave El Greco the most trouble, for he had learned nothing on this subject while painting icons. He did not understand the gradual diminution of the figures in the background as is apparent in his early works. In Byzantine art the figures are huddled together and are of one size. He solved the question later as is quite evident in *San Mauricio*.

In his old age he sometimes returned to his old love and dropped all idea of perspective. In one of the landscapes he painted of the town of Toledo, the buildings in the distance are of the same size and height as those in the foreground. The art of landscape painting was in its infancy at the time and El Greco must have painted this picture in his studio, not as the town

really was, but as he thought it should be, for the Alcazar appears much larger than the Cathedral and is placed on the wrong side of the latter.

One of the peculiarities of El Greco was the number of pictures he painted of the same subject. It is said he produced ten more or less similar paintings of *San Francisco*. This tendency probably came from his early education in painting icons.

At times he seems to have worked very rapidly, for example the *Apostles* in Toledo appear to have been executed quickly and without the slightest correction. Then again he must have painted slowly and with great care for some of his work resembles miniature painting.

He painted three pictures of *Christ Healing the Blind*, three of *Christ in the Temple*, each one different, correcting in the later pictures what he considered were faults in the earlier examples. Of *San Jerónimo* he painted two similar pictures one slightly smaller than the other. There are three examples of *El Espolio* in existence, each different from the others, as to composition as well as to size. There is a second *San Mauricio* in the Royal Gallery at Bucharest. It is one-quarter the size of the picture in the Escorial and different in



really was, but as he thought it should be, for the Alcazar appears much larger than the Cathedral and is placed on the wrong side of the latter.

One of the peculiarities of El Greco was the number of pictures he painted of the same subject. It is said he painted up more or less similar paintings of the Resurrection. This tendency probably came from his early education in painting icons.

It seems however to have worked very rapidly, for though the *Expulsion* in Toledo appears to have been executed quickly and without the slightest corrections, then again he must have painted slowly and with great care for some of his work resembles miniature painting.

He painted three pictures of *Christ Healing the Blind*, three of *Christ in the Temple*, each was different, correcting in the later pictures what he considered were faults in the earlier examples. Of *San Jeronimo* he painted two similar pictures one slightly smaller than the other. There are three examples of *El Espalla* in existence, each different from the others, or at least composed of two different parts. There is a second *San Marcos* in the Chapel Gallery at Buckham. It is one quarter the size of the picture in the Hospital and different in







conception. There is a picture of *San Martin and the Beggar* in Toledo, and a smaller example in the Widener Collection in Philadelphia.

It is difficult to describe El Greco's coloring for in no two of his pictures are the colors alike. If half a dozen paintings by our artist were hung side by side, it would be possible to recognize who had painted them by the technique, but not so easy to place them by their coloring. He used color more as an expression than as a decoration. Some of his pictures are golden in color, others are steel gray, then again certain of his works resemble frescoes.

A beautiful and original hand with unusually spaced tapered fingers is found in many of his pictures. It is the right hand of Christ in *El Espolio*, the hand on the breast of the *Caballero*. It appears in *La Asunción*, *La Resurrección*, *Santiago*, *San Ildefonso*, *La Magdalena* and in the many pictures he painted of *San Francisco*.

He also painted the naked human foot in an original manner. The second toe is unduly long and widely separated from the big toe. This seems unnatural to-day, but is quite possible in a foot that had been formed by wearing a sandal.



## XII.



It is only in late years that the art of El Greco has had any direct influence on modern art, for it was practically unknown outside of Spain.

The travellers, artists, and critics who journeyed through Spain were so impressed by the greatness of Velásquez that they totally overlooked El Greco.

El Greco's style is peculiar and is difficult to describe. It appeals to an artist or true connoisseur, but not to the ordinary traveller. A possessor of real art appreciation cannot help being interested even in his most grotesque figures, while the uninitiated observer passes them over in bewilderment.

In Kugler's "Handbook of Art," 1861, El Greco's name does not even appear. Others mention him as a madman. One critic speaks of him as follows:

"Il a des abus de blanc et de noir, des oppositions violentes, des teintes singulières, des attitudes strapassées, des draperies cassées et chiffonnées à plaisir, mais dans tout cela règnent une énergie dépravée, une puissance maladive qui trahissent le grand peintre et le fou de génie. Peu de tableaux m'ont autant intéressé que ceux du Greco, car les plus mauvais ont





It is hardly in late years that the art of El Greco has had any direct influence on modern art, for it was practically unknown outside of Spain.

The travellers, artists, and critics who journeyed through Spain were so impressed by the greatness of Velasquez that they usually overlooked El Greco.

El Greco's style is peculiar, and is difficult to describe. It appeals to an artist or true connoisseur, but not to the ordinary traveller. A possession of real art appreciation cannot help being interested even in his most grotesque figures, while the uninitiated observer passes them over in bewilderment:

In Ruskin's "Handbook of Art," after El Greco's name does not even appear. Others mention him as a madman. One critic speaks of him as follows:

"Il a des chus de blanc et de noir, des oppositions violentes, des lignes singulières, des attitudes érepsées, des draperies vagues et chiffonnées à plaisir, mais dans tout cela règne une énergie d'après-là, une puissance malade qui trahissent le grand peintre et le fin de génie. Pour les tableaux m'ont autant intéressé que ceux de Greco, car les plus mauvais ont



EL ENTIERRO (FRAGMENTO)



toujours quelque chose d'inattendu et de chevauchant hors du possible, qui vous surprend et vous fait rêver."

Ford says: "He was very unequal, what he did well was excellent, while what he did ill was worse than anything done by anybody else. He was often more lengthy than Fuseli and as leaden as cholera morbus."

Sir Edmund Head writes of *El Espolio*: "Its position and the glow of its color, as well as the grouping of the subordinate personages, gives a unity to this work that has rarely been surpassed."

In more recent times the critics have been more complimentary.

Señor Bereute, the celebrated Spanish critic, remarks:

"C'est une véritable énigme que son procédé, tantôt il paraît compliqué, tantôt il est si simple qu'on peut suivre la trace du coup de pinceau sur la préparation rougeâtre de la toile. Le Greco empâte en général ses chairs sans exagération, à petites touches, et il ajoute quelques coups de pinceau définitifs très accentués mais très délicats."

It was through Velásquez only that El Greco has had great influence on modern art.

Velásquez was but fifteen years old when El Greco

died and it is not probable that he knew him, but no doubt he was greatly impressed by his paintings which were well known and intimately studied by him.

Writing of the early life of Velásquez Señor Bereute says:

“Pendant cette période de la vie de Velásquez, se produisit un fait digne de remarque, étant donnée la personnalité et l'indépendance du maître. Il s'agit de l'influence indiscutable qu'exercèrent alors sur lui les tableaux de Greco. Il les vit et les étudia sans doute à Tolède. Velásquez qui s'était soustrait à l'influence de Rubens et qui avait échappé aux séductions des Vénitiens, trouva sans doute chez le Greco quelque chose de supérieur qu'il tâcha de s'assimiler.”

Velásquez visited and painted in Italy but with the exception of the portrait of the Pope Innocent X, which hangs in the Doria Gallery in Rome, and reminds one of Titian, he seems to have adopted but little that was Italian.

Señor Bereute writes further:

“L'adoption par Velásquez de teintes gris argenté dans la coloration des chairs, l'emploi de certains carmins, une plus grande liberté d'exécution, tels sont les points où se fait sentir l'influence du Greco. Il lui doit





dead and it is not probable that he knew him, but we doubt he was greatly impressed by his paintings which were well known and intensely studied by him.

*Sketch of the early life of Velázquez before Berenute says:*

"Pendant cette période de la vie de Velázquez, on peut en fait dire de remarque, être dominé par les préoccupations l'indépendance du maître. Il s'agit de l'homme insaisissable qu'on rencontre alors aux bords du golfe de Gênes. Il les vit et les studia sans doute à l'italien Velázquez qui s'était soustrait à l'influence de Rubens et qui avait échappé aux séductions des Vénitiens, comme sans doute aussi le Greco, quelque chose de supérieur qu'il cherchait à assimiler."

Velázquez studied and painted in Italy but with the exception of the portrait of the Pope Innocent X, which hangs in the Florentine Gallery in Rome, and remains under Titian, he seems to have adopted but little that was Italian.

Scholar Berenute writes further:

"L'absence par Velázquez de teintes gris argen-  
teuses dans les chairs, l'emploi de certains car-  
actères de composition, l'absence d'exécution, tels sont les  
principaux traits de l'influence du Greco. Il lui doit





certaines finesses de coloris, une harmonie de tons gris distinguée, que ses toiles ne présentaient pas jusque-là. L'étude du Greco lui apprend à employer les gris fins dans le coloris des chairs et enrichit sa palette de plusieurs couleurs nouvelles." This was written by the best technical and artistic biographer of Velásquez.

Cossio's opinion is:

"El Greco was the only master of Velásquez and Velásquez was El Greco's only disciple."



# PORTRAITS





## PORTRAITS

El Greco appears to have been much interested in painting portraits, for there are some thirty odd still in existence that are known to be by him. Throughout his career he also had the habit of placing portraits in his large as well as his smaller pictures.

He did not paint portraits of dwarfs or *crétins* but confined himself to the best society of his day. His subjects were ladies, clericals, friars, and caballeros, or Spanish noblemen. He painted an artist, a doctor, and a poet. It is by these portraits that we may study the history of the native types in Spain during the XVI century. They illustrate the physical as well as the moral expression of the best class of the Castilian people, and they show plainly that it was this class that was frequented by our artist. They are living people, full of life and spirit. These portraits differ from those of the Italian and German schools in the fact that they might well have been painted at the present time.

The eyes in most of the portraits one sees are of self-satisfied people, or of persons who appear to be thoroughly bored, but the eyes that El Greco painted

are quite different. His subjects have eyes that are full of spirit and expression, eyes that seem to see something of great interest or else are animated by some bright thought. They are not fixed, but appear to beam with intelligence. He was not only a painter of men but also a portrayer of souls.

There are faults in drawing and in light and shadow in his early portraits, but during his Spanish days he produced numerous examples of great interest, taste and beauty.

One of the traits of El Greco was that he often placed his own portrait as well as those of his friends in his pictures. His own portrait is in *El Espolio* and in *San Mauricio* as well as in other pictures, and there is also a self-painted portrait of our artist in Madrid.

In the large painting *El Entierro del Conde De Orgaz* we see in the heavens an enthroned Christ surrounded by saints to whom the soul of the dead Count is being offered. In the lower half of the picture, St. Augustine and Saint Stephen are gently placing the armor-clad body of the Count in the tomb while some thirty courtiers, including El Greco, watch the ceremony with sad faces. The courtiers are all portraits of prominent hidalgos and clericals.



the most intense. His subjects have eyes that are full of light and expression, eyes that seem to see and think of great interest or else are animated by intense emotion. They are not fixed, but appear to move with intelligence. He was not only a painter of the face, but also a portrayer of souls.

He was master in colour and in light and shadow. He painted many early portraits, but during his Spanish days he painted numerous examples of great interest, taste and beauty.

One of the merits of El Greco was that he drew painted not only portraits as well as those of his friends in his lifetime. His own portrait is in *El Espolio* and in the *Albano* as well as in other pictures, and there is the well-known portrait of our artist in Madrid.

In the large painting *El Entierro del Conde de Orgaz* which is the heroism of the world Christ is represented by a woman holding the soul of the dead Count in being raised. In the lower half of the picture, St. Augustine and St. Thomas are slowly placing the embalmed body of the Count in the tomb while some thirty courtiers, including El Greco, watch the ceremony with interest. The courtiers are all portraits of prominent



EL ENTIERRO (FRAGMENT)



It is not my purpose to describe the portraits El Greco painted. Description is impossible without criticism, and I do not pretend to be a critic. Then again it is impossible to describe from memory what one has not seen for some years.

I include a list of the known portraits and also reproductions of a few that please me most.















